BLOG

RECENT POST

Acrylograph Paint Pens: Tips + How to Get Pens to Flow Again
27 August 2025

Creating A Quote Page in your Journal
24 August 2025

Creative Listing: The New Best Way to Play AND Journal?!
23 August 2025

SPOILER ALERT! First Look at the September 2025 Subscription Box - Wonderous Skies
22 August 2025

Tips and Tricks To Cover Up Mistakes in your Bullet Journal
20 August 2025

What Is A Commonplace Book And How To Start One

By Ambassador Team 08 Dec 2024 3 Comments

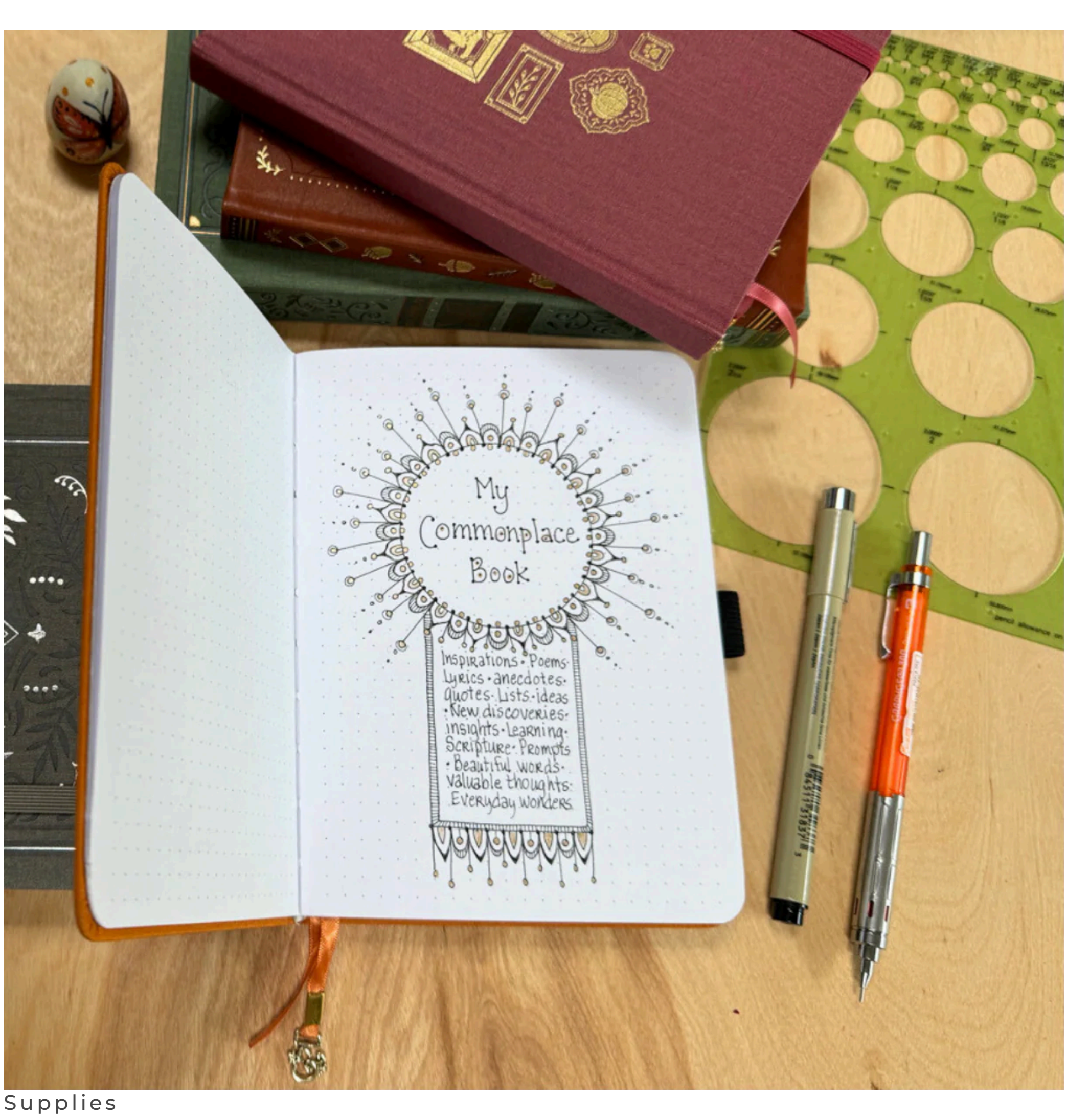
Hello! Valerie Sjodin here, and today I'm going to be sharing about keeping a Commonplace Book: what it is, how to start one, tips and ideas to inspire you to make your own Commonplace journal. Also included is a how-to video demo and PDF of drawing a title page idea for your Commonplace notebook.

GET 15% OFF

What is a commonplace book?

A commonplace book is a journal where you write down information you want to remember or revisit. It is extremely versatile and adaptable to be what you want.

I found having a commonplace journal is a great way to record ideas that I would forget if I didn't write them down in a place to find easily.


My Commonplace Book
Inspirations · Poems · Lyrics · anecdotes · Quotes · Lists · ideas · New discoveries · insights · Learning · Scripture · Prompts · Beautiful words · Valuable thoughts · Everyday Wonders

Supplies

- A dotted journal. I am using a B6 size notebook from the Attic Treasures collection
- mechanical pencil
- Circle template or compass
- Eraser
- Ruler
- Fine liner pens, .01 and .05 size.
- Acrylograph pens

You can get 10% discount on your Archer & Olive purchase by using the affiliate code Valerie10. When you purchase with the code, you get a discount and I get a small commission - Win/Win!

MICRON 01
ACRYLOGRAPH
My Commonplace Book
Ideas · Inspirations · Lyrics · Anecdotes · Quotes · Poems · Lists · Research · Learning · Prayers · Verses · New Discoveries · Beautiful Words · Everyday Wonders

A bit of Commonplace Book background & personal history

For centuries commonplace books have been used to collect information. Long before the internet, commonplace books were used as a hands on, old school way of recording and organizing information someone wanted to keep. In a way, it's kind of like having a folder on your computer that contains themed documents. In my opinion, the commonplace journal is better than a computer folder in many ways: it is tangible and able to hold in my hand, and because it is in my own handwriting or sketching, it is more personal; the content is more carefully chosen, and I'm more likely remember the information put in there.

A number of years ago, I learned about commonplace books. The first thing I learned is that I had been writing one and didn't even know it. Maybe you have too.

My first commonplace journal, was in high school, when I didn't know what a commonplace book was. It wasn't actually a book at all, but a stationary box of papers where I wrote quotes that were meaningful. I regularly added quotes and poems to it and kept it for years, until I finally typed them out on the computer and printed it out. I've lost track of my quote collection on my computer, but if I had written it in a notebook like Archer & Olive, it would be on my shelf today for reference.

DR. ANITA PHILLIPS
THE GARDEN WITHIN
NOTES & QUOTES from The Garden Within

Benefits of keeping a commonplace journal:

- To help explore, process and organize ideas in one tangible place
- To remember things that inspire you - fuels creativity
- To chronicle the process of a project
- To increase mental capacity and intelligence
- To be a place to put intentional thoughts and learning into words
- To encourage idea development and information assimilation that can be a springboard for other projects

Ideas for Your Commonplace Book:

- Notes from books, courses, and podcasts
- Research about your current interest/s
- Quotes
- Observations
- Song lyrics
- Scripture
- Prayers
- Meditations
- Wise words
- Anecdotes
- Ideas & insights
- Theme journal- home & garden, nature, music, poetry
- Word of the Year
- Recipes
- Traveling or focused location
- Lists of all kinds

Imagine! The possibilities are endless!

Most of my art journal ideas have grown out of working out the ideas in a dotted journal first. Below the illustrated garden journal, in an Archer & Olive square watercolor notebook, and the commonplace journal, open below, were done during the same time as I was focusing on my garden. My research, quotes and inspiration were written in the B6 dotted commonplace journal below. The illustrated garden journal is done in an Archer & Olive watercolor notebook, 8" square size.

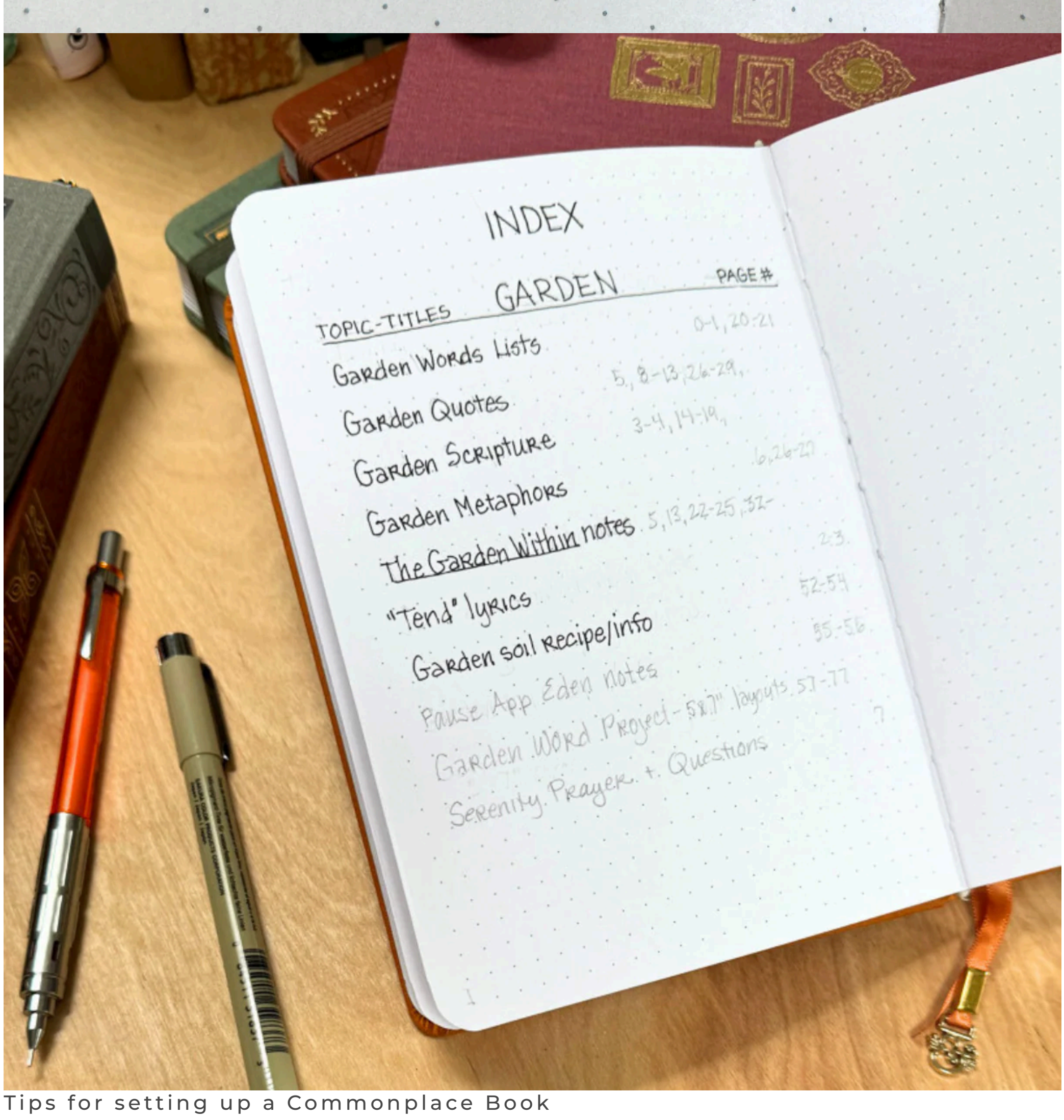
Veggies Salad Herbs
The most important aspect in maintaining a flourishing and healthy garden is the attentive presence of the gardener.
TEND
MICRON 01

Keeping a Commonplace Book

Making and keeping a commonplace journal that works for you is the most important thing. It may be different than what works for me. My process and way of doing it has definitely evolved and will likely continue to shift and change to accommodate my current needs and desires. With that said, here are some tips that have helped me and what I'm doing now in my current commonplace journals.

Organizing the information in my Commonplace journal

I leave some blank pages at the beginning of the journal for a Content/Index section. The Contents or Index page is an ongoing process done in pencil first. The reason is, I find that I often add information to a subject, such as 'themed quotes', in a number of places in the journal. This way I can simply add the new page number to the 'themed quotes' already listed in the Contents section. Using pencil at first allows for additions and changes can be easily erased and modified. I add page numbers to the subject on the Content page as I go. When the commonplace book is filled, I go back and write the page numbers and any penciled topic in with pen on the content pages.


INDEX
TOPIC-TITLES GARDEN PAGE #
Garden Words Lists 0-1, 20-21
Garden Quotes 5, 8-13, 26-29,
Garden Scripture 3-4, 14-19,
Garden Metaphors 6, 26-27
The Garden Within notes 5, 13, 22-25, 32-
"Tend" lyrics 52-55
Garden soil recipe/info 55-56
Pause App Eden notes
Garden Word Project - 5x7 layouts 57-77
Serenity Prayer + Questions

Tips for setting up a Commonplace Book

- Dotted notebooks are ideal for a commonplace journal. They provide the dots for straight writing, and the dots are light enough to not be a distraction for any visual elements you might want to add. The 160 gsm weight of the Archer & Olive notebooks also allow for some light watercolor and mixed media. So the possibilities are endless.
- Tabs or stickers can be used to mark the beginning of topics, themes, or sections. Color coding topics in the index and on the side of the pages can help too.
- Notebook sizes: Of course, personal preference is the best option to go with - what works for you! I've used different sizes for a commonplace journal, beginning with letter size and using mostly the A5 size over the years. Currently my favorite size is B6 size. It's nearly 5"x7" size is small enough to carry in my bag and big enough to write down what I need to without feeling too small.

- Leave some blank pages to record your Index/Content list at the beginning. If you run out of space, you can use blank pages at the end of the journal to create an index with the same formatting as Index/Content at the beginning of the journal.

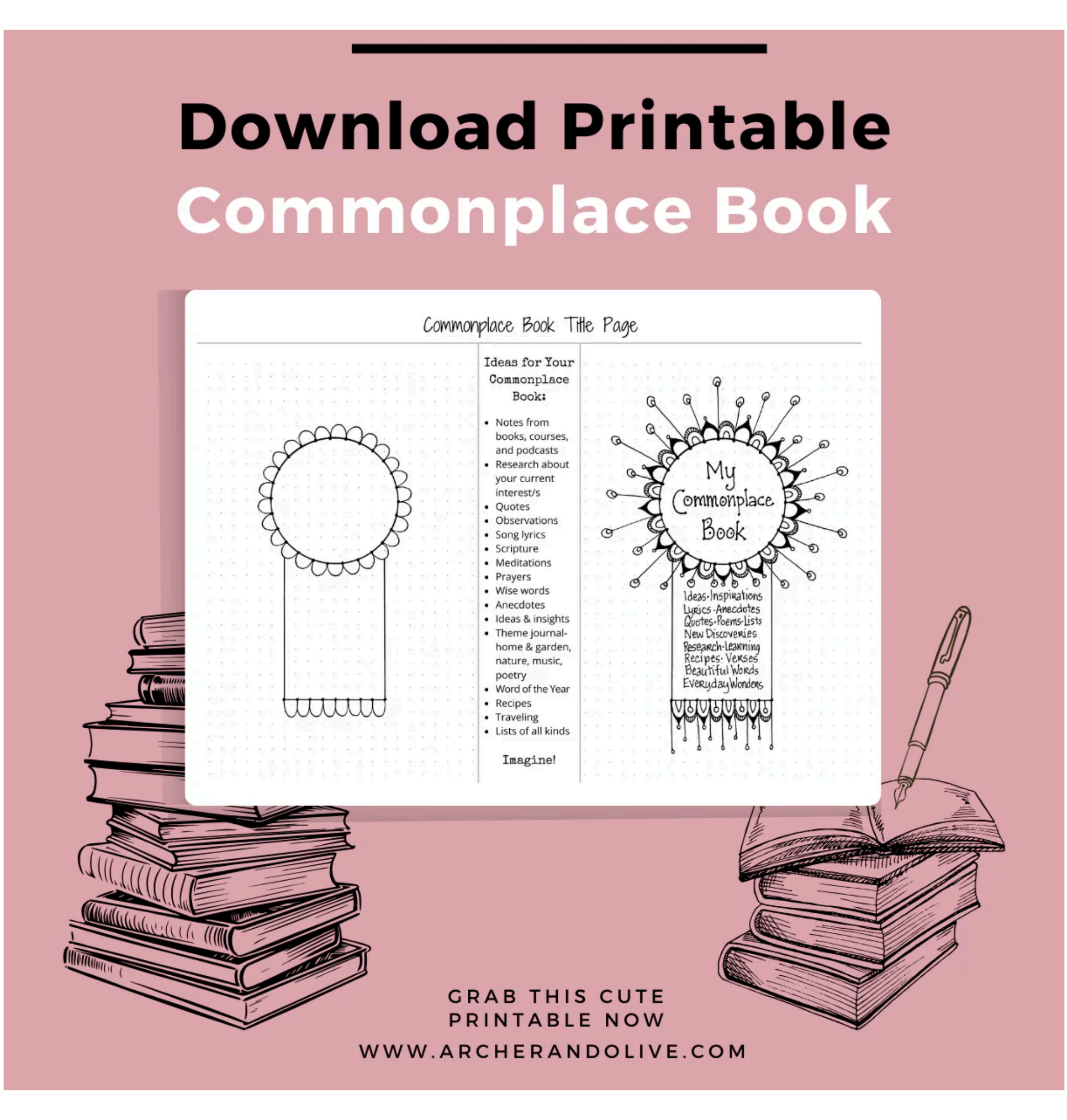
- Write the Contents page information along with the corresponding page numbers in pencil on the Contents page. Additional page numbers for that specific content can be added as needed. You can go over it with pen later.

- Add page numbers in the lower corners as you go so you have page numbers to list in the Index/Content section/s.
- Don't put pressure on yourself if your commonplace journal sits dormant for awhile. Just pick up where you left off. If there are blank pages, look at them as an invitation for the future.

I don't put any pressure on myself to plan out how the pages are going to look. At the same time, if my journal feels and looks good, I am more likely to come to my journal with enthusiasm and want to write in it.

Video Tutorial

Here is a video demo showing how to draw a fancy title page for your journal and accompanying pdf for your inspiration:


Download Printable
Commonplace Book
Commonplace Book Title Page
Ideas for Your Commonplace Book:
Notes from books, courses, and podcasts
Research about your current interest/s
Quotes
Observations
Song lyrics
Scripture
Prayers
Meditations
Wise words
Anecdotes
Ideas & insights
Theme journal- home & garden, nature, music, poetry
Word of the Year
Recipes
Traveling
Lists of all kinds
Imagine!
My Commonplace Book
GRAB THIS CUTE
PRINTABLE NOW
WWW.ARCHERANDOLIVE.COM

More Inspiration

You can find another inspirational Archer & Olive commonplace journal blog post by Shawna Clingerman, How to Create a Commonplace Book for Quotes. She approaches her commonplace quote journal in a creative, whimsical way.

Another post I found inspiring is by Vanilla Papers, 10 Tips to start a commonplace book (and why you should)

Thank you for stopping by. I hope you are inspired. You are welcome to share and tag @archerandolive, @archerandolive.community, #AOShare and #archerandolive and #valeriesjodinstudio.

If you'd like more inspiration on art journaling, planner journal set-up, word of the year journaling and more, visit my blog at: https://valeriesjodin.com/blog.

Be blessed!

Tags: Commonplace Book Contents page Title page Valerie Sjodin

PREV POST NEXT POST

3 Comments

25 Feb 2025 Cindra

as always thank you for the inspiration! Merry Christmas and God bless you and yours!

25 Feb 2025 Lynne

Beautiful artwork!

25 Feb 2025 Annie

Gorgeous and so inspiring. Putting some of those journals on my Christmas wish list.

Leave A Comment

Name

Email

Comment

Please note, comments need to be approved before they are published.

POST COMMENT

JOIN THE FUN

Get freebies, first looks, and exclusive offers directly to your inbox.

Email Address SIGN UP

☐ I agree to receive emails from Archer and Olive.

SEE THE LATEST ON SOCIAL

SHOP
NOTEBOOKS
PENS
WASHI TAPE
NOTEPADS
SUBSCRIPTION BOX

INFORMATION
BLOG
OUR MISSION & STORY
CAREERS
FIRST TIME HERE?
SHOP US IN STORE
REFER A FRIEND

CUSTOMER SERVICE
CONTACT US
STORE POLICIES
FAQ
PRIVACY STATEMENT
ACCESSIBILITY
CAREERS

© 2025 ARCHER AND OLIVE